

Coins

Mint errors thrive in the fad field

By Roger Boye

THE UNITED STATES MINT occasionally goofs in producing the nation's 11-billion-plus coins each year.

But coin collectors don't mind these mistakes. In fact, most are thrilled when an error slips by a mint inspector and gets into circulation.

Some numismatists devote a lifetime to examining and cataloging coins minted with imperfections. The collecting of coin errors has become one of the hobby's fastest growing fads.

Pioneers in the coin error field have identified three major classes of error:

● **Planchet errors.** Planchets are metal disks on which coins are struck. But some planchets are damaged, defective, or the wrong size. Such planchets would create a coin that is too thin or thick, cracked, or clipped.

● **Die errors.** The die is the piece of metal into which the design of the coin is engraved. When the die strikes the planchet in a coin press, the coin is produced. Many errors are caused by defective dies. For example, some dies become filled with metal, producing letters which look "filled." Other dies might become scratched, gouged, or cracked, producing long

lines or other markings.

● **Striking errors.** These are often the most spectacular errors, caused when the die incorrectly strikes the planchet. Pictured is a 1971-D cent in which the die struck the planchet about 50 per cent off center. Other striking errors are caused when pieces of metal or other matter comes between the die and planchet, or when the die strikes the planchet more than once in different spots causing a double or triple-looking design.

Value varies with supply and demand. Coins with the more common planchet and die errors are often worth only a small amount.

Three popular books on coin errors are "The Official Guide to Mint Errors" by Alan Herbert, "Modern Mint Mistakes" by Phil Steiner and Mike Zimpfer, and "Major Variety and Oddity Guide of U. S. Coins" by Frank G. Spadone. These and other books on coin errors can be purchased in local coin stores and bookstores.

In addition, several organizations specialize in coin errors. Two national clubs are Collectors of Numismatic Errors, Inc., Dept. G, Box C, Deadwood, S. D. 57732 and Numismatic Error Collectors of America, P. O. Box 21, City Island, N. Y. 10464.